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ABSTRACT

This document describes President Clinton's call to action for American education in the 21st century. Strong, safe schools with clear standards of achievement and discipline, and talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom are needed. Priorities include: setting rigorous national standards, with national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math to make sure children master the basics; making sure there is a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom; helping every student to read independently and well by the end of the third grade; expanding Head Start and challenging parents to get involved early in their children's learning; expanding school choice and accountability in public education; making sure schools are safe, disciplined, and drug free, and instilling basic American values; modernizing school buildings and helping support school construction; opening doors of college to all who work hard and make the grade, and making the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as high school; helping adults improve their education and skills by transforming the tangle of federal training programs into a simple skill grant; and connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000 and helping all students become technologically literate. (RT)

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ED 459 527

A Call to Action For American Education

In the 21st Century

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PRESIDENT CLINTON'S CALL TO ACTION FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

To prepare America for the 21st century, we need strong, safe schools with clear standards of achievement and discipline, and talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom. Every 8-year-old must be able to read, every 12-year-old must be able to log onto the Internet, every 18-year-old must be able to go to college, and all adults must be able to keep on learning.

We must provide all our people with the best education in the world. Together, we must commit ourselves to a bold plan of action:

- ✔ **Set rigorous national standards, with national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math to make sure our children master the basics.**
- ✔ **Make sure there's a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom.**
- ✔ **Help every student to read independently and well by the end of the 3rd grade.**
- ✔ **Expand Head Start and challenge parents to get involved early in their children's learning.**
- ✔ **Expand school choice and accountability in public education.**
- ✔ **Make sure our schools are safe, disciplined and drug free, and instill basic American values.**
- ✔ **Modernize school buildings and help support school construction.**
- ✔ **Open the doors of college to all who work hard and make the grade, and make the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as high school.**
- ✔ **Help adults improve their education and skills by transforming the tangle of federal training programs into a simple skill grant.**
- ✔ **Connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000 and help all students become technologically literate.**

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S CALL TO ACTION FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In his 1997 State of the Union address, the President made clear that his number one priority for the next four years is to ensure that Americans have the best education in the world. He issued a ten-point call to action for American education in the 21st century to enlist parents, teachers, students, business leaders, and local and state officials in this effort:

✔ **Set rigorous national standards, with national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math to make sure our children master the basics.** Every 4th grader should be able to read; every 8th grader should know basic math and algebra. To help make sure they do, the President is pledging the development of national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math, and challenging every state and community to test every student in these critical areas by 1999. These tests will show how well students are meeting rigorous standards and how well they compare with their peers around the country and the world. They will help parents know if their children are mastering critical basic skills early enough to succeed in school and in the workforce. Every state and school should also set guidelines for what students should know in all core subjects. We must end social promotion: Students should have to show what they've learned in order to move from grade school to middle school and from middle school to high school. We must make sure a high school diploma means something.

✔ **Make sure a talented and dedicated teacher is in every classroom.** In addition to the talented and dedicated teachers already in the classroom, 2 million new teachers will be needed over the next ten years to replace retirees and accommodate rapidly growing student enrollments. We must take advantage of this opportunity to ensure teaching quality well into the 21st century by challenging our most promising young people to consider teaching as a career, setting high standards for entering the teaching profession, and providing the highest quality preparation and training. We should reward good teachers and quickly and fairly remove those few who don't measure up. The President's education budget will make it possible for 100,000 master teachers to achieve national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards over the next ten years.

✔ **Teach every student to read independently and well by the end of the 3rd grade.** Reading is the key to unlocking learning in all subjects. While America's 4th graders read on average as well as ever, more than 40 percent cannot read as well as they must to succeed later in school and in the workforce. Research shows that students unable to read well by the end of the 3rd grade are more likely to become school dropouts and truants, and have fewer good options for jobs. The President's **America Reads Challenge** is a

nationwide effort to mobilize a citizen army of a million volunteer tutors to make sure every child can read independently by the end of the 3rd grade. Parents, teachers, college students, senior citizens, and others can all pitch in to give children extra help in reading during the afternoons, weekends, and summers. At the same time, schools must strengthen the teaching of reading in the school day, and the President's budget invests more in programs that address reading achievement in school.

✔ **Expand Head Start and challenge parents to get involved early in their children's learning**. A child's learning begins long before he or she goes to school. That's why the President's budget expands Head Start to benefit one million children by 2002. Parents are their children's first teachers, and every home should be a place of learning. The President and First Lady will convene a conference this spring to review recent scientific discoveries on early childhood learning and to show how parents, teachers, and policy makers can use this new knowledge to benefit young children. And in June, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore will host their sixth annual family conference, and focus on the importance of parents' involvement throughout a child's education.

✔ **Expand school choice and accountability in public education.** The President has challenged every state to let parents choose the right public school for their children. Innovation, competition, and parental involvement will make our public schools better. We must do more to help teachers, parents, community groups, and other responsible organizations to start charter schools—innovative public schools that stay open only as long as they produce results and meet the highest standards. The President's budget doubles funding to help start charter schools so that there will be 3,000 charter schools at the dawn of the 21st century, providing parents with more choices in public education.

✔ **Make sure our schools are safe, disciplined and drug free, and instill American values.** Students cannot learn in schools that are not safe and orderly and do not promote positive values. We must find effective ways to give children the safe and disciplined conditions they need to learn, such as by promoting smaller schools, fair and rigorously enforced discipline codes, and teacher training to deal with violence. We should continue to support communities that introduce school uniforms and character education, impose curfews, enforce truancy laws, remove disruptive students from the classroom, and have zero tolerance for guns and drugs. We should also keep schools open later as safe havens from gangs and drugs, expanding educational opportunities for young people in the afternoons, weekends, and summers, and providing peace of mind for working parents.

✔ **Modernize school buildings and help support school construction.** Just as we face unprecedented and growing levels of student enrollment, a recent report by the General Accounting Office shows that a third of our nation's schools need major repair or outright replacement. To keep children from growing up in schools that are falling down, the Administration has proposed $5 billion to help communities finance $20 billion in needed school construction over the next four years.

- ✔ **Open the doors of college to all who work hard and make the grade, and make the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as high school.** To prepare ourselves for the 21st century, we must open the doors of college to all Americans and make at least two years of college as universal as high school is today. The President's HOPE scholarship, a $1,500 tax credit for tuition paid for the first two years of college, would be enough to pay for a typical community college education or provide a solid down payment at four-year colleges and universities. The President also is proposing a $10,000 tax deduction for any tuition after high school, an expanded IRA to allow families to save tax-free for college, and the largest increase in 20 years in Pell Grants for deserving students.

- ✔ **Help adults improve their education and skills by transforming the tangle of federal training programs into a simple skill grant.** Learning must last a lifetime, and all our people must have the chance to learn new skills. Basic literacy and adult education are more important than ever for adults as well as children. Adults should take on the responsibility of getting the education and training they need, and employers should support their efforts to do so. The President's G.I. bill for workers would provide a simple skill grant that would enable eligible workers to get the education and training they need.

- ✔ **Connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000 and help all students become technologically literate.** Our schools must now prepare for a transition as dramatic as the move from an agrarian to an industrial economy 100 years ago. We must connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000, so that all children have access to the best sources of information in the world. The President is proposing to double the funding for America's Technology Literacy Challenge, catalyzing private-public sector partnerships to put the information age at our children's fingertips. CEOs of some of America's most innovative technology and communications firms have already responded to the President's challenge to work with schools to get computers into the classroom, link schools to the Internet, develop effective educational software, and help train our teachers to be technologically literate.

NATIONAL STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Student achievement is not improving fast enough. Across our nation—in our cities, suburbs, and rural communities alike—far too many students are still not meeting the standards that will prepare them for the challenges of today and tomorrow. What the top 20 percent of our students typically learn in math in the 8th grade is learned by most students in Japan in the 7th grade. And while today America's 4th graders read as well as ever on average, 40 percent cannot read as well as they should to hold a solid job in tomorrow's economy.

As a nation, we do not expect enough of our students. Strong schools with clear and high standards of achievement and discipline are essential to our children and our society. These standards of excellence are important to help instill the excitement, knowledge and basic values, such as hard work, that will set our children on the right track. Unfortunately, we currently give far too many of our students a watered-down curriculum inadequate to prepare them for the challenges of the global society and information age. For too many of our children, we create a tyranny of low expectations. A watered-down and boring curriculum and low expectations are the surest way of turning a child eager to learn into an angry, high school dropout who can't read.

Every child can learn. We know that every child in America can meet higher standards, if we have the courage and the vision to set the standards, to teach up to them, and to test whether children have learned what we have taught them. Every state and every school must establish meaningful standards for what students should master in the core subjects. Only with a standard measure of excellence can parents hold schools accountable for improved performance, teachers and principals improve curriculum and instruction, and students have a guide for charting their own progress.

Mastering the Basics: High National Standards in Reading and Math

Every 4th grader should be able to read independently; every 8th grader should know algebra. To help make sure they do, we are going to provide states and local schools the opportunity to participate in rigorous national tests based on these widely accepted standards for reading and math. By 1999, every state should test every student in the 4th and 8th grades to make sure these standards are met. No matter where they live and no matter their background, all our students must master the basics.

- ***Reading and math are critical starting points in our drive toward higher standards***.

  It is essential that our students master the basics of reading English by the end of 3rd grade. At 4th grade, students are expected to read so they can learn science, history, literature and mathematics. If they can read by then, they can read to learn for a lifetime.

Students who fail to read well by 4th grade often have a greater likelihood of dropping out and a lifetime of diminished success.

It is also important that our students master the basics of math and the essentials of algebra and even geometry by the end of 8th grade. They will then have the foundation to take college prep courses in high school and compete in the world arena. The United States ranks below average internationally in 8th-grade math. We must do better.

A New National Test in 4th-Grade Reading and 8th-Grade Math

- ***The Clinton Administration will support the development by 1999 of rigorous national tests for use by individual students based on the widely accepted 4th-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test and the 8th-grade Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) test of mathematics.***

  Although the national reading and math tests will be based on existing tests (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] in reading and the math portion of the Third International Math and Science Study [TIMSS]), new tests must be developed. NAEP and TIMSS test a random sample of students to produce estimates of overall statewide and nationwide student achievement; no one student takes the entire test. In contrast, the new tests will be expressly designed to produce individual student scores that will be useful for parents and teachers.

  The new tests will be developed during 1997 and 1998, with a pilot test in the spring of 1998 and the first full administration in the spring of 1999. They will be updated annually. The U.S. Department of Education will provide ongoing funding for the development of the tests, and funding for administering and scoring them during the first year. Guidance for test development will come from the most successful math and reading teachers across the country, as well as from parents, governors, and local and state education, civic and business leaders.

- ***The Administration is challenging every state and local school across the country to participate in these tests so students, teachers, and parents will know how they are progressing.***

  States and school districts can administer the tests as part of their local testing program. After each test's administration, the entire test (along with answers and scoring guides) will be released, placed on the World Wide Web, and widely distributed with supporting materials, so students, parents and teachers can know what is necessary to reach standards of excellence. New tests each year will keep the content current.

We need a national effort to ensure that our students learn the basics and achieve world-class standards of excellence in America's schools. These tests will help show us who needs extra help and which schools need to be improved.

- ***The Administration urges schools and teachers to work over the next two years to improve instruction and prepare their students for these tests by 1999.***

Preparing students for the national tests in 1999 means providing students the instruction they need to read independently and well by the end of 3rd grade and the after-school and summer tutoring they need. And it means ensuring that every student by the end of 8th grade has mastered the basics of mathematics and has had a good introduction to algebra and even geometry. While this will require teachers, parents, schools, communities and states to take a hard look at the rigor of what is being taught and the extent to which children are now learning, we know it can be done.

For example, the results on the 8th-Grade Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test showed that the United States is below average in mathematics achievement when compared with other countries. TIMSS also showed that U.S. students receive a less demanding and less focused curriculum, with instruction focused more on teaching mathematical procedures and less on helping students understand mathematical concepts. However, the **First in the World Consortium**, a group of 20 Chicago-area school districts that joined together to try to become the best in the world in math and science, defied these data, scoring among the top nations in science and second only to Singapore in math.

Developing Challenging Academic Standards in All Core Academic Subjects

Many states and school districts—along with thousands of educators, parents and business and community leaders—have been working to develop better academic standards for students. In almost every core subject, we are better off today because of their efforts in defining essential knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. But the work is not yet done.

Places that Set High Standards Have Shown a Difference In Student Achievement

In 1993, the chancellor of the **New York City** Schools required all students to take math and science courses at the level of the state's Regents honors exam. In 1995, State Education Commissioner Richard Mills announced that all students would be required to take Regents-level classes starting with that fall's freshman class (the graduating class of 2000). Since the City University of New York (CUNY) began its College Preparatory Initiative with the district, the number of New York City freshmen with four years of English has risen by 59 percent, the number of students passing CUNY math entrance exams has increased by 7.5 percent, and the number of Hispanic and black students who passed the science test has more than doubled. Entering freshmen at the City University of New York are reportedly the best prepared academically in two decades.

Several important pieces of legislation developed by the Clinton Administration together with Congress support the efforts of local schools, communities and states to develop challenging standards and high-quality assessments and improve teaching and learning to help all children reach those standards:

- The **Goals 2000: Educate America Act,** passed in 1994, is helping communities across the country raise academic standards, improve teaching, increase parental involvement and expand the use of technology in the classroom. Communities in all 50 states and thousands of schools have decided to participate in Goals 2000, and many more than the program currently has money to support want Goals 2000 funding to raise standards.

- The **Improving America's Schools Act of 1994** fundamentally reformed Title I—a $7 billion program for teaching basic and advanced skills in high-poverty schools—to get rid of lower educational expectations for poor children and ensure that disadvantaged students are held to the same standards as other children. The Improving America's Schools Act also expands professional development focused on preparing teachers to help students reach the new standards, provides opportunities for waivers of federal requirements for the first time, and offers start-up funds for charter schools.

- The Clinton Administration reinforces the importance of higher standards for all children through its proposal for the **reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, as well as through strategies to support and strengthen bilingual education programs.

While the federal government can provide support and leadership through its programs, the success of this drive toward high standards rests in the hands of teachers and parents, business,

community and religious leaders, and others at the grassroots level. Every community, school, and state needs to continue its work to develop challenging standards and high-quality assessments, measure whether schools are meeting those standards, cut red tape so that schools have more flexibility for grassroots reforms, and hold schools, teachers, and students accountable for results.

States Are Making Progress in Developing Standards and Improving Achievement in Critical Areas

Since the early 1980s, the United States has made significant strides in raising standards and improving student achievement. Across the country, 48 states are developing common standards in core academic subjects, and 42 states either have or are developing assessments to measure student progress towards those standards. The proportion of students taking the core courses recommended in *A Nation at Risk* (4 years of English, 3 years of social studies, 3 years of science, 3 years of math) has increased from 14 percent in 1982 to 52 percent in 1994. These efforts are beginning to pay off. The number of students passing advanced placement (AP) exams has more than tripled since 1982. Combined math and verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are at their highest since 1974, while the number and diversity of students taking the SAT have increased dramatically. American College Testing (ACT) scores have increased or held steady in each of the last four years. Math and science achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has risen since the early 1980s. And in states like Kentucky, which established comprehensive school improvements six years ago, student achievement is on the rise: more than 92 percent of Kentucky's schools posted achievement gains in 1995-96, and 50 percent of schools in the state met or exceeded their performance goals.

Preparing Academically for College

To get ahead and navigate these changing times, our middle and high school students today need to be preparing to go to at least two years of college and probably go back to college, postsecondary training programs, and universities several more times in their lifetime to continually upgrade their skills and knowledge. That means our elementary and secondary schools need to raise their standards for promotion and graduation. They need to make mastering the basics universal and strengthen all of their core subjects from science to American history and English and from the arts to foreign languages. Students can get on the path to college by mastering successfully not only basic math but the essentials of algebra and geometry by the 8th grade. High schools need to eliminate their general track and replace it with advanced placement and tech-prep classes and other rigorous courses. Students need to be preparing to handle college

work and careers. That's why the President in his 1998 budget is supporting expansion of advanced placement courses, raising standards for students, teachers and schools, and continuing support for tech-prep.

Holding Students and Schools Accountable for Reaching High Standards

It is not enough to set high standards; we must be willing to hold people accountable for meeting them. Our schools and teachers must give all children the help needed to meet high expectations. But we must also say: no more free passes. Today, only a handful of states in the country require young people to demonstrate what they've learned in order to move from one level of school to the next. Every state should do this and put an end to social promotion. No one in America should graduate with a diploma he or she can barely read.

Not only students should be held to high standards. Schools must also be held accountable for results. Despite the central importance of a school principal in leading a successful school, few states hold their districts accountable for having good principals in every school and then give the principals the authority they need to do the job. Too many school districts spend much too much money on central administration and too little money on education and instruction. It is time to hold administrators, as well as educators, accountable for results.

- **Every diploma must mean something, and students should pass tests to move from one level of schooling to the next.**

  Once we set high expectations for students, we must help them believe they can learn, challenge and motivate them so they want to learn, ask them to grasp challenging subjects, assess whether or not they're learning, reward them when they succeed and hold them accountable when they fall short. Every state should require a test for students to move from elementary school to middle school, or from middle school to high school or to receive a high school diploma. These tests should measure mastery of the basics and the rigorous material expected in these tough new standards.

  Some children may not measure up at first and may need extra help to lift themselves up. Give them the extra help in afternoons, weekends and summers, keep schools open as homework centers, involve their parents more—do whatever it takes to encourage and help them master the basics and perform to the challenging standards we expect of them. If we believe all students can learn, we have to give them a chance to demonstrate it. Students, teachers, and schools will all perform better once we do.

- **We must begin holding schools and their states or school districts accountable for results.**

  We must insist that schools and districts have good principals, recruit and hire talented

teachers, reduce administrative costs, and provide more options for parents. Moreover, we should overhaul or shut down schools that fail, and allow new charter schools to start over in their place. The Clinton Administration is urging states and districts to use their authority under the reformed Title I program to hold schools accountable for the assistance they receive, including reconstituting chronically failing schools.

TALENTED TEACHERS IN EVERY CLASSROOM

Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom and at least one master teacher certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in every school. Our most promising young people also must get encouragement and support to become teachers.

This nation faces several challenges in sustaining and upgrading the quality of our teachers. Two million teachers will be needed over the next ten years to replace retirees and accommodate rapidly growing student enrollment. This presents an enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21st century, if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training.

As we demand higher levels of knowledge and skills from our students, we must honor and support our teachers in the classroom today, equipping and expecting them to help our students master the basics and be prepared for college, employment, and good citizenship. Without quality teachers and teaching, our most serious efforts to raise standards and improve schools will not succeed.

Everyone has a role to play in helping our teachers become the best in the world. Parents, schools, community leaders, universities, state leaders—and most important, current and future teachers themselves—can take many steps to address this challenge.

- **Identify and reward our most talented master teachers.** For many years, many educators, led by North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, have worked hard to establish nationally accepted credentials for excellence in teaching. More than 500 of these master teachers have been certified since 1995. Under the President's budget, 100,000 more teachers over the next 10 years will be able to seek certification from the National Board as highly accomplished master teachers—enabling at least one teacher in every school to get certification from this board. States, school districts, and the private sector can also establish rewards for master teachers and other excellent teachers they identify in such ways as through teacher-of-the-year competitions. School districts can call on these master teachers to become mentors for other teachers.

- **Do more to challenge talented young people and mid-career professionals in other areas to become teachers and help them make the transition into a teaching career.** Communities can start middle and high school academies for students interested in becoming teachers, and states can establish centers for teacher recruitment that bring promising students into teaching. States can make it financially easier for young people to teach in high-need areas through fellowships and loan forgiveness programs. School districts can make sure that beginning teachers get support and mentoring from

experienced teachers. The Clinton Administration proposes to change the tax law so that more students can use community or public service to repay their student loans without owing tax. It will continue working to make college and teacher preparation more affordable for young people who go into teaching.

- **Reinvent teacher preparation for beginning teachers and improve professional development for more experienced teachers so they get the training they need to help students master the basics and reach high standards in the core academic areas**. Colleges, universities and school districts must provide current and future teachers ongoing, sustained opportunities to learn how to be more effective and upgrade their skills. The Clinton Administration has supported their efforts by increasing funding that may be used for sustained professional development, stronger teacher standards, and performance evaluation for teachers. The Eisenhower Professional Development program, Goals 2000, and the National Science Foundation's Teacher Enhancement Program also provide substantial support for high-quality professional development.

Teacher Recruitment—Starting Early

School districts and universities can work together to create middle and high school programs that expose young people to the teaching profession. For example, the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment has reached thousands of academically talented high school juniors and seniors through its Teacher Cadet Program, offered in more than 140 schools statewide. Teacher Cadets study education and have the opportunity to teach younger students under the tutelage of both school and university faculty. The center also targets minority middle school students, encouraging them to take rigorous courses in school and aspire to a career in teaching.

- **Expand efforts to help teachers become technology literate and to use technology to improve training available to teachers.** The President's technology initiatives will play a major role in helping teachers to become technology literate. For example, the President's Technology Challenge Grant program supports private-public sector partnerships to develop models for using technology in education, such as providing "electronic field trips" for new teachers to learn from expert teachers and mentors around the country. Moreover, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund will leverage public funds to target school districts and schools committed to helping teachers integrate technology into the classroom. Finally, the Clinton Administration's 21st Century Teachers initiative will recruit thousands of technology literate teachers to upgrade their knowledge and help at least five of their colleagues learn how to use technology in the classroom.

- **Set high standards to enter teaching and find ways to help—or quickly and fairly remove—teachers who don't measure up**. School districts and teachers can help start

and participate in peer assistance programs where they help identify, and then provide intensive assistance to, burnt-out or low-performing teachers. School districts can develop fair and faster processes for holding teachers accountable and assisting or removing teachers who are not making the grade. Educators and communities should not look the other way if a teacher is burned out or not performing up to standard. The Clinton Administration will share promising strategies for recruiting talented young people and others into teaching, rewarding good teachers, and quickly and fairly improving or removing teachers who don't make the grade. The Administration also will provide guidance to schools, districts, and states on how existing federal funds can be used to address these challenges.

Upgrading Teacher Skills: An Award Winning School

The Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, in Manhattan, Kansas, was established as a "professional development school" where current and future teachers can go for assistance in upgrading their skills and knowledge in math, science, and technology. The school helps teachers understand the widely acclaimed math standards developed by the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, and prepares them to help students meet or exceed these standards. At the school, student test scores on the Kansas Mathematics Assessment Test have improved for the past three years, including especially strong gains for girls. The school recently was one of five schools to win a national award from the U.S. Department of Education for its efforts to give teachers the skills they need to help students succeed.

AMERICA READS CHALLENGE

"We ought to commit ourselves as a country to say that by the year 2000, 8-year-olds in America will be able to pick up an appropriate book and say 'I can read this all by myself.'"

Remarks by President Clinton to the Community of
Fresno, California, September 12, 1996

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 40 percent of America's 4th graders are reading below the basic level—not nearly as well as they must to keep up with the complexities of today's jobs and society. We need to really push toward improving our efforts to help all children read.

While teachers and schools have the critical responsibility for making literacy and the basics a top priority, study after study finds that sustained individualized attention and tutoring after school and over the summer can raise reading levels when combined with parental involvement and quality school instruction. Reading with children at the youngest age, quality pre-school, and tutoring from pre-school to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade can work to help all our children read at an early age—but certainly by the end of the 3rd grade. If families, schools, community groups, employers and religious groups make improving the reading skills of children and adults a top priority from the earliest years of a child's life at home until he or she becomes a successful reader, then America can attain the goal of being a reading, literate society.

For this reason, in August 1996, President Clinton announced the **America Reads Challenge** to ensure that every child can read well and independently by the end of 3rd grade. And he called on all people in America—parents, teachers, libraries, religious institutions, universities, college students, the media, community and national groups, business leaders, senior citizens—to join the effort to meet this challenge. Already, groups from Jumpstart in Boston to the Reading One-One program in Richardson, Texas, have responded enthusiastically to the President's challenge.

The President has pledged $2.75 billion over 5 years toward the **America Reads Challenge** which includes:

- ***America's Reading Corps*** of one million tutors to provide individualized after-school and summer tutoring for more than three million children in pre-K through 3rd grade who want and need extra reading help. Thirty thousand reading specialists and tutor coordinators, including Americorps volunteers, will mobilize and train this corps of one million volunteer tutors who will work with teachers, principals and librarians to help children succeed in reading.

- ***Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants*** that invest in success by supporting effective and proven local efforts, as well as regional or national networks, that assist

parents who request help to better work with their children so that they may become successful readers by the end of 3rd grade. Research shows that reading to children in their first three years helps children learn words and concepts and actually stimulates physical development of the brain.

- ***Expansion of Head Start.*** The President's balanced budget will expand Head Start to reach one million 3- and 4-year-olds by the year 2002, while continuing the new 0-3 year-old Head Start initiative. The priority of providing all children with high-quality preschool responds to studies stressing that literacy problems are best averted with the earliest intervention possible, including preschool.

- ***Support for 100,000 College Work-Study Students to Serve as Reading Tutors.*** Last year, the President signed into law a budget that increased the number of work-study jobs for college students by a third—enabling an additional 200,000 young people to work their way through college. The President has called for half of all new work study funds to support 100,000 college students to serve as reading tutors, thereby providing a unique opportunity for college students to be involved in helping young children learn to read. To encourage this activity, the Secretary of Education has waived the employer matching fund requirement for those work-study students who tutor pre-K through elementary school children in reading. Also, the President has called upon college presidents to rally other students and college resources to help America read. More than twenty college presidents have already stepped up to lead this effort.

- ***Accountability for Results.*** The Administration will use the improvements in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to provide an annual measure of the reading performance of 4th graders and their progress toward meeting the reading challenge.

A challenge to every parent, teacher, principal, and community member

The success of the America Reads Challenge depends on the involvement of all Americans—parents, teachers, principals, libraries, religious institutions, universities, college students, the media, community and national groups, cultural organizations, business leaders, and our senior citizens.

- ***Parents should read to their children 30 minutes a day.*** Even as babies, children are learning about language from their families. Talking to them, reading to them, and singing with them even in these earliest years can make a big difference. Parents need to turn off the TV, take their child to the library and get a library card, talk with teachers about their child's progress, and take time to read with their child at home. Parental involvement makes a real difference. According to a recent study, 4th-grade average reading scores were 46 points below the national average where principals judged parental involvement to be low, but 28 points above the national average where parental involvement was high.

- ***Schools should provide a high-quality reading program for all students***, including making sure teachers know how to teach kids to read and have the support they need to do so. They must also identify those students who need extra help. The **America Reads Challenge** is not a substitute for in-school reading programs. Instead, it is designed to build on the work of teachers and schools to improve their in-school reading programs, as well as on the Administration's investments in Title I, Even Start, bilingual education and other in-school programs to strengthen in-school teaching and learning.

- ***Community members*** should start an **America Reads Challenge** reading tutoring program at their local school, library, or community center or become a reading tutor after school, on weekends, and in the summer. The Clinton Administration, through the summer Read*Write*Now! effort, already has begun working with organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, the American Association of Retired People, the U.S. Catholic Conference, the American Library Association, the International Reading Association, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and Reading is Fundamental to mobilize reading partners for children during the summer months.

- ***Businesses should work with schools and libraries.*** The Administration also is working with the private sector in helping parents help their children learn to read, through the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. Employers can help start a summer reading program in their community as part of the Read*Write*Now! effort to avoid the summer drop-off in reading.

- ***Colleges and universities*** should use half of their new funds for work study to provide reading tutors. If all colleges meet this challenge, 100,000 work-study students in 1998 would be tutoring young children in reading. Already 60 college presidents have pledged almost 10,000 work-study slots in support of this goal, as well as thousands of other students to do community service as reading tutors.

For more information on the **America Reads Challenge**, call 1-800-USA LEARN or visit the U.S. Department of Education's home page at www.ed.gov/

AmeriCorps SLICE Corps, Simpson County, Kentucky

In this program, 25 AmeriCorps members provided intensive tutoring in reading to 128 2nd graders, helping the students improve their reading comprehension by an average of 2.8 grade levels over nine months. One-third of the students improved by more than three grade levels. Members visited each student's home every other week to show parents their children's reading materials, update them on the child's academic progress and offer tips on how to help their children read. The key is consistency. AmeriCorps SLICE members tutor students for the entire school year. As a classroom teacher said about one student: "[The student] is in his second year of being tutored by a SLICE Corps member. Last year he was very shy and withdrawn. He was very adept verbally but not so at reading and writing. This year his reading is better and he really enjoys writing. He's a real worker and seems to enjoy school much more. [The student's] parents are very interested in his school progress. They are willing to come whenever you call them and they spend time working with him on his school work. He has thrived on the individual attention that only a SLICE Corps member could give him."

Samuel W. Mason Elementary School, Boston, Massachusetts

Mason School, once cited in a 1990 *Boston Herald* article, with its then enrollment of 133, as "The Least Chosen Elementary School In The City," turned itself around through a variety of innovative approaches. The school has 296 students (43 percent African American, 23 percent Cape Verdian, 14 percent Latino, 13 percent white, 3 percent Asian American, 2 percent Native American). Twenty-four percent of the homes are non-English speaking. Reading has been a primary emphasis of Mason's improvement efforts. Teaching teams include Reading Recovery and Resource Room teachers. These teachers work with grade-level clusters in the morning to reduce the student-teacher ratio from 26:1 to 13:1. In the afternoon, the team works with the kindergarten and early childhood teachers in the early literacy program, "Bright Start," in groups of nine students. Title I reaches all students and doubles the time in reading instruction. Special attention is paid to learning styles, with emphasis on accelerated reading instruction and problem-solving activities. In 1995, Boston College's Urban District Assessment Consortium Project found that Mason's reading performance exceeded the average score for the City of Boston and for the other 11 urban school systems in the project.

What It Means to Read Well by 4th Grade

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) defines three main levels of 4th-grade reading: basic, proficient, and advanced, and they help explain what it means to read well by the 4th grade. The following sample passage is from *Charlotte's Web*, by E.B. White. While not from the actual NAEP, it helps illustrate the kinds of skills expected of students at each level of comprehending a work of fiction:

> Having promised Wilbur that she would save his life, she was determined to keep her promise. Charlotte was naturally patient. She knew from experience that if she waited long enough, a fly would come to her web; and she felt sure that if she thought long enough about Wilbur's problem, an idea would come to her mind. Finally, one morning toward the middle of July, the idea came. "Why how perfectly simple!" she said to herself. "The way to save Wilbur's life is to play a trick on Zuckerman. If I can fool a bug," thought Charlotte, "I can surely fool a man. People are not as smart as bugs."

- Students at the **basic** level are able to read the passage and tell what Charlotte promised Wilbur.
- Students at the **proficient** level are also able to describe why Charlotte thought she could fool Zuckerman.
- Students at the **advanced** level recognize that Charlotte compares waiting for ideas to entrapping a fly.

President Clinton's **America Reads Challenge** asks all Americans to pitch in and help children read so that by the time they reach the 4th grade, they can at least read at the "basic" level and many more than now are reading at the "proficient" level.

EARLY LEARNING

The latest research on the human brain and its development confirms what we have known for decades—that the early years of children's lives are critical to their cognitive, emotional and physical development. Parents need to be their children's first teacher if their children are to start at school ready to learn.

Since the beginning of the Clinton Administration, investment in early childhood education has been a top priority. Over the last four years, the federal government has invested heavily in effective programs, increasing funding for Head Start by 43 percent. The Clinton Administration is committed to building on this progress to ensure that every parent is their child's first teacher and every child arrives at school ready to learn.

Expanding Head Start

- ***Head Start Helps Children Get Ready to Learn and Ready to Read.*** For more than 30 years, Head Start has been one of our nation's best investments in helping low-income parents be their children's first teacher, and in making sure that children start school ready to read and ready to learn. Head Start provides hundreds of thousands of three- and four-year-old children cognitive, social and language development, comprehensive health services and healthy meals and nutrition. Head Start offers parenting skills, support, education and training to parents seeking to improve their circumstances and their children's chances of success.

- ***President Clinton's Budget Expands Head Start Participation to One Million Three- and Four-Year-Olds.*** Today, 800,000 low-income children and their families—but not all of those who are eligible—have a chance to benefit from Head Start. The President's budget plan continues to expand enrollment so that, by the year 2002, one million of this nation's most disadvantaged children and families will have the chance for a head start.

- ***Head Start Works.*** Research findings overwhelmingly show that Head Start works. Last year, a Packard Foundation study reviewed nearly 150 separate studies of the Head Start program and concluded that it not only had the immediate impact of raising reading scores, but had the lasting effect of making students less likely to be held back a grade, less likely to be placed in special education classes, and more likely to graduate from high school. Even later in life, former participants were less likely to go on welfare or enter the criminal justice system.

- ***Parental Involvement Is the Bedrock of Head Start.*** Last year more than 800,000 Head Start parents demonstrated their commitment by volunteering in their local program. And they get a great deal in return: Head Start staff work closely with parents to help them build their skills, not only to become better parents but also to become contributing members of their community. Parents are taught the importance of reading to their children. When parents have difficulty reading, Head Start programs work with them to improve their literacy skills.

- ***Early Head Start and Quality Improvements Under the Clinton Administration.*** In 1994, the Clinton Administration established the **Early Head Start** program, providing tens of thousands of children ages zero to three and their families with family-centered and community-based services. Over the last three years, the Clinton Administration has also invested significantly in improving program quality, providing local programs with the resources they need to attract and retain high-quality teachers and to improve the quality and safety of the Head Start centers.

- ***Family Literacy is a New Priority in Head Start.*** Under new standards developed by the Clinton Administration, family literacy is a new priority in Head Start as well as in Even Start—all parents will be offered training to help them be involved in their children's education and to help them be their children's first teacher.

- ***The America Reads Challenge Will Build on the Strong Foundation Provided by Head Start.*** After-school and summer tutoring for young school-age children and for their older siblings and parents builds on what Head Start begins. Through the Head Start Transition Initiative, Head Start programs will dedicate at least one part-time staff person to work with local school systems, parents, child care providers and other members of the community to make sure children successfully make the transition from Head Start to public school.

Other Early Learning Opportunities

- ***America Reads Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants:*** To make sure that every child can read well by the end of 3rd grade, the President's **America Reads Challenge** includes Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants that will invest in proven efforts to provide assistance to parents who want to help ensure their children will read well. The grants will fund national and regional networks to share information on how parents can help children to read, and fund the expansion of successful local programs, such as the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) or the Parents as First Teachers (PAT) program. The President's proposal includes $300 million over five years for these grants.

- ***White House Conference on Early Learning and the Brain.*** Thanks to the latest scientific research and discoveries, we now know much more about a child's cognitive, emotional and physical development in the first few years of life. For example, we now know that reading

to children in their first three years not only strengthens the emotional bonds between a parent and a child and helps children learn words and concepts, it also actually stimulates their brain growth. The President and First Lady will convene a White House conference this spring to explore the implications of these scientific discoveries and research for parents and policy makers.

- ***National Prescription for Reading Campaign.*** In December 1996, the First Lady announced, along with representatives of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Booksellers Association, the American Library Association, and the Reach Out and Read program, a national campaign to put books in the hands of parents who bring their young children to the doctor, and to get doctors to prescribe daily reading. Doctors and nurses across the country are beginning to "prescribe reading" to infants and young children because they know the impact reading has on babies and young children, and they have a unique opportunity at every check-up to encourage parents to read to their children daily.

- ***Vice President's Conference on Family and Learning.*** In June 1997, Vice President and Mrs. Gore will hold their sixth annual family conference, this time on families and learning. We know that children learn best when their parents are active partners in the process. The conference will bring together leaders in the field of education, parents, teachers, and policy-makers to build on successful examples of partnerships among families, schools and communities, including those that help children learn before they start school.

- ***Partnership for Family Involvement in Education:*** Over 2,000 family, school, community, employer and religious groups have joined with Secretary of Education Richard Riley to create the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. The Partnership's efforts include strengthening at-home activities that encourage reading, promoting and adopting family-friendly business practices such as providing leave time to attend parent-teacher conferences and volunteer in schools, and supporting community-based organizations and schools to work together to create neighborhood learning communities through organized before- and after-school and summer activities.

- ***Goals 2000 Parent Resource Centers:*** In addition to involving parents in the development of state and local Goals 2000 education plans, the President's Goals 2000 program provides funding for each state to establish parent resource centers that help parents learn how to help their children achieve high standards. The centers coordinate existing programs, provide resource materials, and support a variety of promising models of family involvement programs. In fiscal year 1997, $15 million in funding is available for support centers in 42 states, 14 more than in 1996.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

One size does not fit all in American education. All students and their families need to be able to choose a public school that meets their needs, and schools must be given more flexibility in return for greater accountability to parents and the public for high standards. Public school choice and public charter schools are especially promising strategies for expanding options and accountability in public education.

Public School Choice

- ***States and school districts should provide public school choice plans*** that give every parent the ability to choose their child's public school. States and communities can provide parents with their choice of school within a district, state, or even of smaller schools-within-schools at their neighborhood public school. Local and state boards of education can encourage and support the development of charter schools, magnet schools and other choice strategies and undertake careful reviews of charter proposals to be sure they are of the highest quality. The President has challenged states to provide parents with more choice in their children's public education, and states and communities have been responding.

- ***Provide report cards on every school.*** States and school districts can publish in print and on the Internet report cards on every school, providing parents the information they need to choose their child's school. This can help parents compare things such as reading scores, graduation rates, class size, courses offered, number of teachers with advanced certification, safety records, and other key measures, with those of schools across the school district, state, and country.

Public Charter Schools

- ***Every state should pass a charter school law that enables parents and teachers to start new public charter schools that stay open only as long as they do a good job.*** These schools can be created by teachers, parents, community groups, businesses, universities, museums, and others. Done right, they can be tailored to meet the needs of their students and promote healthy competition within public education. State legislatures must enact solid charter school laws to support the creation of a sizable number of high-performing public charter schools, providing these schools with real flexibility while holding them accountable for reaching high standards for all children. Five years ago, there was only one charter school in America. Today, there are more than 400, and half the states have charter school laws.

- ***To support these efforts, the Clinton Administration, together with Congress, is expanding start-up funding for charter schools.*** The Administration has proposed nearly doubling the charter school start-up grant program to $100 million in FY 1998. The President initiated this fund in 1994 to address the most commonly cited obstacle to creating these schools—lack of access to start-up funding. The President's budget plan sets aside enough funding to quickly bring more choices in public education to students and their families, helping to start 3,000 charter schools over the next several years. The funding requested for FY 1998 alone would support the development of about 1,000 charter schools by teachers, parents, community groups, and other responsible organizations.

The Nation's First Charter School: A Teacher's Vision Becomes Reality

City Academy, in St. Paul, Minnesota, was the first charter school in the nation. Founded by two teachers with assistance from many of the first-year students, the school focuses on youth who have dropped out of school. City Academy, placing a heavy emphasis on student responsibility and decision making, is a small school with a personalized learning environment and has had significant success. Most of the students, all former dropouts, have graduated and gone on to some kind of postsecondary education. Like most charter schools in Minnesota, this school was started "from scratch," rather than converted from an existing school. The school's director is also helping teachers in other states to create charter schools.

- ***The Clinton Administration will assist local teams of parents, teachers, community leaders, and others to develop successful public charter schools.*** The Clinton Administration will support regional meetings, helpful guidebooks, summer institutes, and a World Wide Web site to help provide the information and assistance needed to start high-quality schools, including developing the rigorous performance benchmarks by which schools may be held accountable.

Accountability

- ***Fix failing schools quickly and directly—even if it means closing them and then reopening them in a way that meets the needs of students, parents, and communities.*** Clear standards can be set to evaluate the success or failure of schools, and school districts and states can intervene when schools are not meeting these standards. These efforts should take advantage of the new approach to accountability in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—the largest federal program in K-12 education—which now requires states and school districts to intervene in low-performing schools with such strategies as intensive technical assistance, mentoring, reconstituting failing schools, or creating new charter schools.

School districts can support and reward principals and teachers who establish an atmosphere of learning, a system of accountability, and a spirit of adventure that help students learn. At the same time, school districts can find ways to improve or remove teachers or principals who are not making the grade. In return for greater accountability, principals and teachers, in turn, should be given the authority and support they need to do a good job.

Holding Schools Accountable for Results

Maryland has held its schools accountable for results by putting in place a system for taking over schools with low student attendance rates and achievement on state assessments. Low-performing schools are first given the opportunity to improve based on a state-approved plan. Though no schools have been taken over yet, the focus on accountability is making a difference. For example, after being identified as low performing, Patterson High School in Baltimore hired a new principal who focused her team on increasing student achievement by reorganizing instruction and the school day. As a result, attendance rose, more students passed the state's graduation test, and more seniors graduated than in prior years.

Greater flexibility

- ***In return for accountability, the Clinton Administration has pressed for greater flexibility and local decision making in the use of federal program funds.*** Drawing on their experiences as former governors, both President Clinton and Secretary of Education Richard Riley came to Washington strongly committed to increasing flexibility for states and communities, cutting red tape, and supporting states and communities in their own education improvement efforts. Since 1993, the President and the Secretary have implemented the Goals 2000 program with no new regulations, cut nearly 80 percent of elementary and secondary education program regulations, approved over 140 waivers of requirements of major federal education programs, and cut the paperwork required to receive student loans. In addition, they have given nine states the authority to grant waivers of federal requirements for their own school districts and made over 20,000 schools eligible to combine most of their federal funds to support schoolwide reform, freeing them from most federal requirements.

SAFE, DISCIPLINED, AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

We cannot educate our children in schools where weapons, gang violence and drugs threaten their safety. For students to learn well, their schools must be disciplined and feel safe. While most schools do provide a secure learning environment, a growing number of schools in all types of communities—urban, suburban, and rural—are experiencing problems with violence and with alcohol and drug use.

Fortunately, schools, parents, and communities are finding practical ways to provide children the safe and disciplined conditions they need and should expect to find in school, such as by promoting smaller schools, respectful communities, fair and rigorously enforced discipline codes, teacher training to deal with violence, school uniforms, and after-school programs that keep kids productive and off the streets.

As a nation, we too must do everything possible to ensure that schools provide a safe and secure environment where the values of discipline, hard work and study, responsibility, and respect can thrive and be passed on to our children. We have a basic, old-fashioned bottom line. We must get drugs and violence out of our schools, and we must put discipline and learning back in them.

Ensuring Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools

The Clinton Administration challenges all schools to have in place high standards of discipline and behavior with tough measures to keep guns and drugs out: a "zero tolerance" policy. In October 1994, the President signed into law the **Gun-Free Schools Act**, and issued a Presidential Directive later that month to enforce "zero tolerance" in our schools: If a student brings a gun to school, he or she does not come back for a year.

In last year's budget, the President successfully protected the **Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program**, which now provides school security, drug and violence prevention and education programs in 97 percent of America's school districts.

We must continue working to ensure that every child, every teacher, and the community can feel safe in and around the school building.

- ***Schools should consider adopting uniform policies.*** School uniforms are one way to deter school violence,

In 1994, the **Long Beach, California** School District implemented a mandatory school uniform policy for nearly 60,000 elementary and middle school students. District officials found that in the year following implementation of the policy, overall crime decreased 36 percent, fights decreased 51 percent, sex offenses decreased 74 percent, weapons offenses decreased 50 percent, assault and battery offenses decreased 34 percent and vandalism decreased 18 percent.

promote discipline and foster a better learning environment. The Administration sent a *Manual on School Uniforms* to the nation's 16,000 school districts last year. The manual is a road map for communities and schools that want children in their schools to wear uniforms and is a vital source of information about successful programs.

- ***Communities should enforce truancy laws.*** One of the most effective ways to reduce juvenile crime is to crack down on truancy. The Administration has ~~also~~ provided every school district in the country with a *Manual to Combat Truancy* to help communities establish fair and effective laws to reduce truancy and keep kids in school and off the streets.

- ***Keep schools open in the afternoons and summers.*** The President's budget includes a new initiative to provide additional safe havens and to extend learning opportunities for children and their families at schools around the country. The initiative will help after-school, summer and weekend programs get started as Community Learning Centers, get us "back to basics" and foster active community involvement. Keeping schools open late can help give young people a safe haven from gangs and drugs, and peace of mind for working parents. They can serve as homework centers, offer enrichment courses and tutoring in reading, math, and science, and help prepare young people and other neighborhood members to go to college.

Bringing in Parents to Increase Safety

Fathers at Beech Grove City Schools in Indiana have joined together to be "Security Dads," attending school-sponsored sporting events, dances and other student activities. Security Dads ensure proper behavior, evict troublemakers when necessary, and generally keep the peace. As a result of this effort, parents' involvement in their children's education has increased and student behavior has improved.

Making Schools Places for Values, Not Violence

Schools are a place for values, not violence. They must teach the basic American values of respect, hard work, and good citizenship.

- ***Promoting character education as part of every curriculum.*** We cannot raise standards in every other subject if we fail to teach our children good values and how to be good citizens. Toward this end, the President has hosted two White House Conferences on Character Education and has encouraged the development of character education through the Improving America's Schools Act.

- ***Protecting the religious freedom of students and reaching out to America's religious community to support the learning of young people.*** With the support of a diverse group of religious and school leaders, Education Secretary Riley issued guidelines in August 1995 to make clear that students' religious rights do not end at the schoolhouse door. As a result of these guidelines, reported the National School Boards Association, there has been a dramatic drop in the need to help school officials clarify what is allowed in public schools when its students practice their religion. In addition, 33 religious communities representing 75 percent of religiously affiliated Americans signed onto the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. Two successful religion and education local summits also brought together religious leaders, school officials, and the leadership of community organizations and businesses.

- ***Promoting greater parental involvement.*** Thirty years of research shows that greater parental involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education for every student. Through the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, the Department of Education has played a critical role in helping schools to be more welcoming and inviting to families; encouraging employers to provide ways for parents and employees to be involved in education, including volunteering in their local schools; and expanding the support that youth, community, cultural and religious groups are giving to back greater family involvement in education. Over 2,000 employers, schools, religious, and community groups—including the National PTA, Urban League, John Hancock, Hadassah, Pizza Hut and United Methodists—have joined the Partnership and have pledged to support the education of children and the involvement of their parents.

Service in Support of Safety

In Los Angeles, AmeriCorps members are working with thousands of students to reduce school violence. AmeriCorps members mentor and tutor 2,000 community youth, train them in conflict resolution skills, and help establish after school programs.

- ***Promoting community service by high school and college students through Learn and Serve and AmeriCorps.*** AmeriCorps is the new domestic Peace Corps that involves Americans of all ages getting things done to meet community needs. In just two years, AmeriCorps has given more than 70,000 Americans an opportunity to serve their country. The vast majority of AmeriCorps members are working on the critical problems of children and youth. They tutor, mentor, organize after-school programs, teach violence and drug prevention, and organize safe havens and safe corridor programs. National service promotes the core values of hard work, self discipline, and personal responsibility. It encourages people to give something back to their country. And it teaches its members to take responsibility for others, not just for a year, but for a lifetime.

> Through Learn and Serve America, more than a half million students from kindergarten through graduate school are helping their communities and proving their academic skills in the process. They are learning citizenship in a direct and vital way, not by textbooks, but by service, by working on real problems in society. The skills and habits they develop—teamwork, self-discipline, initiative—will help them become productive workers as well as responsible citizens. We must spread and develop this idea in every school, college and university, to engage an increasing number of students in America.

The Clinton Administration challenges all students, schools, parents, communities, religious and other groups to do what they can to make all our schools safe, disciplined and drug-free environments to engage and motivate students to learn, and to teach the values of hard work and respect.

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SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND MODERNIZATION

American schools face the twin pressures of rising enrollment and deteriorating buildings. To be ready for the 21st century, our children's schools should be safe and spacious places to learn. The schools of the future should be equipped with computers, new media and state-of-the-art science labs. Clean, well-maintained, up-to-date schools send every student a clear message: you are important to us. We take your education seriously. In order to keep faith with our children, we must ensure that our schools are prepared for the next century.

Distressingly, today our nation's schools, many built 50 years ago, are increasingly run-down, overcrowded and technologically ill-equipped. Too many school buildings and classrooms are literally a shambles. According to a report of the General Accounting Office, one-third of our schools need major repair or outright replacement; 60 percent need work on major building features—a sagging roof, or a cracked foundation; and 46 percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems, and modern communications technology. These problems are found all across America, in cities and suburbs and one-stoplight towns.

We have high expectations of our students, teachers and schools. But we cannot expect our children and our teachers to build strong lives on a crumbling foundation. In order to keep faith with our children, we must ensure that our schools are prepared for the next century. This is a matter of real urgency. This year our schools opened their doors to the largest number of students in the history of our republic—51.7 million. And enrollment is expected to continue to rise over the next ten years, breaking all previous enrollment records.

Because of the unique circumstance of record enrollments and often run-down school buildings, the President has proposed that the federal government for the first time join with states and communities to modernize and renovate our public schools. The President's budget calls for $5 billion over the next four years to help pay for up to half the interest that local school districts incur on school construction bonds, or for other forms of assistance that will spur new state and local infrastructure investment. This financing assistance can help to spur $20 billion in new resources for school modernization—a 25 percent increase above current levels over the next four years.

This school construction initiative is flexible. It will give communities and states the power to decide how to use the new resources. It will help those who help themselves—requiring local communities to take responsibility for this effort. And it will focus on sparking new projects, not merely subsidizing existing ones.

The Broward County, Florida, Public Schools already ranks among the largest school systems in the nation with more than 218,000 students, and it continues to grow at a phenomenal rate (the district estimates it is adding 10,000 more students a year). Although the district added 37 new schools and refurbished many existing schools over the past seven years, the district's projected capital needs over the next seven years total $2.4 billion. Funding from identifiable sources to date totals only $1 billion, leaving a shortfall of $1.4 billion. The county's use of 2,144 portable classrooms has earned it the nickname "the portable capital of the world." Thousands of other students attend classes in areas intended to be music and science rooms, labs or auditoriums. Meanwhile, the space crunch is impeding the system's efforts to make greater use of technology in the classroom, including meeting the superintendent's goal of providing a minimum of four computers in every classroom for student use and one computer for teacher use.

The federal government will do its part by subsidizing the interest that communities incur on school construction bonds or other financing mechanisms—making it cheaper and easier for communities to finance school construction. Communities—with appropriate assistance from states—must do their part by making a commitment in investing in their schools. They must approve and pay for local bond issues needed to repair old schools and build new ones. And they must provide adequate maintenance for today's schools so that they can continue to serve students into the next century.

OPENING WIDE THE DOORS OF COLLEGE

Today, more than ever before in our history, education is the fault line between those who will prosper in the new economy and those who will not. Most of today's good jobs require more skills and training than a high school diploma affords. Over half the new jobs created in the last three years have been managerial and professional jobs requiring higher-level skills. Fifteen years ago the typical worker with a college degree made 38 percent more than a worker with a high school diploma. Today, that figure is 73 percent. People who finish two years of college earn 20 percent more each year and a quarter of a million dollars more than their high school counterparts over a lifetime.

One of the great challenges of our time is making the dramatic economic changes occurring all over the world benefit our young people and open opportunities for our older adults as well. While many people were managing to find education and training that prepared them for high-skilled jobs without a college degree, too many young people lost their way between high school and the world of work. And for those who are academically prepared for college, the cost limits access for many working families and middle-income families, just as it does for low-income families. The average cost of a public college increased from 9 percent of the typical family's income in 1979 to 14 percent in 1994.

We must make two years of college—the 13th and 14th years of education—as universal for young Americans as the first 12 are today. And, we must make college more affordable for all Americans. To support these goals, the President has already initiated an unprecedented college opportunity strategy that will make college more accessible and affordable to Americans than at any time in their lives, while also reducing fraud and abuse and reducing costs to taxpayers.

Over the next five years, the **President's budget will more than double the federal commitment to postsecondary education from the time he entered office—going from $24 billion a year in 1993 to $58 billion in 2002.**

The Direct Lending Program

The Direct Loan program, signed into law by President Clinton in 1993, gives student loans directly to people who need them, with new flexible repayment plans. This dramatic change is making loans to students and their families more affordable and debt more manageable, providing borrowers and participating schools with a simple, more automated and accountable system, while saving taxpayers billions of dollars. In its third successful year, the program will provide $10 billion in loans at over 1,500 schools. More than 2.1 million student and parent borrowers have received direct loans since the program began. During the 1996-97 academic year, it is expected that Direct Loans will make up approximately 36 percent of federal student loans.

An important aspect of the new Direct Loan program is that it provides students the ability to repay their loans as a percentage of their income—**income-contingent repayment**—to encourage community service, and to make debt more manageable and to reduce defaults. As of November 1996, nearly 100,000 borrowers with loans totaling $1.5 billion have consolidated into direct lending. About three-quarters of these borrowers are selecting non-standard repayment options with 52 percent selecting income-contingent repayment.

Through the legislation that created the Direct Student Loan program we were able in 1993 to **reduce by 50 percent (from 8 percent to 4 percent) the student loan fees** that lenders and guarantee agencies were allowed to levy on student borrowers. But we need to do more. We propose to further reduce these fees in both the new Direct Student Loan and the older Federal Family Education Loan programs, cutting loan fees from 4 percent to just 2 percent on need-based Stafford loans, and to 3 percent on other loans for students and parents. Furthermore, because the Congressional Budget Office and other analysts have noted that lender costs are very low during the in-school period, when students are not required to make payments on their loans, we propose to reduce the interest rate paid to lenders during that period by one percentage point.

Increasing Grant Aid Available to Students—Pell Grants

The Administration has worked hard to increase funding for student financial aid programs. Aid available to students increased by $12 billion between 1993 and 1997—an increase of 48 percent. This year, aid available to students will increase by an additional $3.4 billion for a record total of $36 billion (excluding consolidation loans), benefiting an estimated 7.5 million students in 1998.

Pell Grants are the most important form of student financial aid for the nation's neediest students. In the decade preceding 1992, funding for this critical program did not keep pace with inflation, which seriously eroded the Pell Grants' purchasing power. The Clinton Administration began immediately in 1993 to restore fiscal integrity to this program at a time when it had been allowed to accumulate a projected internal program deficit of over $2 billion. After eliminating that program deficit, the President secured bipartisan support for the largest Pell Grant increase in recent history, a $230 increase (9 percent) in the maximum grant to $2,700 in FY97. This represents a full $400 increase, more than 17 percent, in the maximum grant since 1993.

We now are proposing to increase the maximum award from $2,700 to $3,000, as well as greatly expand eligibility to older independent students. Increasing the maximum award to $3,000 provides more aid to currently eligible students, and makes an additional 130,000 students eligible for the grants. The President's budget also expands the eligibility of low income students age 24 and older. This change will make an additional 218,000 students eligible for Pell Grants, and expand aid for over 890,000 students by an average of $800. These changes, contained in the President's balanced budget, will increase Pell Grant funding by $1.7 billion in fiscal year 1998, a more than 25 percent increase over current funding levels.

HOPE Scholarship and Other Tax Benefits: Making the 13th and 14th years of education—at least two years of college—as universal in America as high school is today.

The President's plan includes five tax benefits for middle-class students and families that accept the responsibility to pursue additional education for their children and themselves. We believe that not only will these students and families reap substantial personal and financial benefits from these education incentives, but these investments will also pay a huge long-term dividend to the country. For much of the 20th century, tax policies included incentives to invest in capital and equipment. At the beginning of the 21st century—the education and information age—we must create incentives and tax policies to invest long term in education and human capacity.

HOPE Scholarships. A centerpiece of President Clinton's HOPE and Opportunity Agenda for higher education is the proposed **HOPE Scholarship tax credit**, which offers two years of tuition at the typical community college for any student enrolled at least half-time. It provides students with a maximum $1,500 tax credit for tuition and required fees in their first year, and another $1,500 in their second year if they work hard, stay off drugs, and earn at least a B minus average in their first year. This $1,500 tax credit will pay the full cost of tuition at a typical community college—essentially making community college free or nearly so for every student. In 1998, this credit is expected to help 4.2 million middle-income students pay for college.

Although the HOPE Scholarship tax credit is priced to pay the full cost of two years of tuition at a typical community college, the credit can be applied to tuition at any college, including four-year public and private colleges. The credit would be a substantial down payment for parents sending their children to four-year colleges with higher tuition. Students receiving tax credits would still be eligible for other federal student aid, including student loans, Pell Grants, and Work Study. However, the maximum tax credit would be $1,500 minus any federal grants awarded to the student.

The proposal builds on the enormously successful HOPE Scholarship program in Georgia, which guarantees any student in the state of Georgia free college as long as they have earned a B average and stayed off drugs. This year the scholarships are helping 80,000 students—including 70 percent of the freshman class at the University of Georgia.

The HOPE scholarship tax credit will help open the doors of college opportunity to every American who works hard and makes the grade, regardless of that student's ability to pay, because education at the typical community college will now essentially be free. The program also makes it clear that with opportunity comes the responsibility to work hard and achieve at a high level. This benefit will initially be available without restrictions tied to previous academic performance but the continued benefit will be reserved for those people who, by definition, are willing to work for it. It's America's most basic bargain: we as a nation will help create opportunity if you'll take responsibility.

$10,000 Tax Deduction for Education and Training. We have also proposed a tax deduction of up to $10,000 per family per year for tuition and fees (minus grants) for college, graduate school, community college and certified training and technical programs. In 1998, 8.1 million students stand to benefit from this proposal for tax relief in 1998.

Students eligible for both the tax credit and the tax deduction would choose one or the other, although students benefiting from the tax credit in the first two years would still be eligible for the deduction in later years. Because the tax proposals are meant to help working families and low- and middle-income students pay for college, eligibility for both the tax credit and the tax deduction would be phased out for joint tax filers with incomes between $80,000 and $100,000 and for individual filers with incomes between $50,000 and $70,000.

Helping Make Saving for College Tax Free: Using Individual Retirement Accounts for Educational Savings. We have proposed greater flexibility in using Individual Retirement Accounts so that all funds saved in these accounts can be used for postsecondary education expenses free from early withdrawal tax penalties. In addition, our proposal makes 20 million more families eligible for tax-deductible IRA contributions by substantially extending the income cutoffs for IRA participation. Currently, if an individual or spouse participates in an employer's retirement plan, eligibility is phased out for taxpayers filing a joint return with adjusted gross income between $40,000 and $50,000 (between $25,000 and $35,000 for single taxpayers). The proposal would expand the phase-out ranges to match the ranges described for the HOPE Scholarship tax credit and $10,000 deduction. Families who save through an expanded IRA, and then use the savings for higher education, can deduct up to $10,000 of their withdrawals a year, making savings for college virtually tax free for middle-class families.

Expanding Tax-Free Treatment for Forgiveness of Student Loans. We propose to change the tax law so that more students can use community or public service to repay their student loans without owing tax. Ordinarily, when a lender forgives a loan and erases the remaining debt, the borrower is treated as having income on which he or she must pay tax. Our proposal would eliminate this tax liability when the lender is a charitable or educational institution that lends money to a student to pay for education and then forgives the loan after the student fulfills a commitment to perform community or public service for a certain period of time. To be covered by this proposal, the loan must be used to pay the costs of attendance at an institution of higher education or to refinance other student loans. The same tax-free treatment would apply when the Federal government forgives a loan made through the direct student loan program for a student who has been making income contingent repayments.

Extension of Tax Benefit to Employees Who Receive Employer-Provided Education Assistance (Section 127). We propose reinstating through the year 2000 the current exclusion from an employee's income of up to $5,250 per year of postsecondary educational assistance provided by an employer for undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, for 1998-2000, small businesses would be given a new incentive to provide educational assistance to their employees through a 10 percent tax credit for amounts paid under an employer-provided

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educational assistance program for education provided by a third party.

Other Forms of Aid

National Service Corps. Through creation of the National Service Corps, more than 70,000 AmeriCorps members have been able to provide service throughout the country to work on projects to tutor children to read and learn and to improve the environment, health services, and community policing. This creative new program is helping to regenerate an ethic of community service in this country, particularly for a generation of young adults who were at risk of becoming further alienated from the powerful societal needs of a sense of community and commitment to those communities. The participants also receive scholarships or loan forgiveness for postsecondary education, in return for their service.

Work-Study. Work study helps students earn money while they are in school. The President proposed a multi-year plan to increase funding for this valuable federal program by 50 percent by the year 2000, so that one million students will be able to attain part-time employment. With strong bipartisan support from the Congress we received an exceptional one-year increase of 35 percent for FY 1997. This increase is substantial enough to allow an increase in the wages for student workers, an expansion of traditional work-study opportunities, and, perhaps most important, to expand higher education's commitment to community service activities. To this end, the President has challenged the higher education community to use one-half of the college work-study increase for community service, primarily to tutor young children in reading. Indeed, the Secretary of Education has issued regulations to waive the match for those who use work-study funds to help tutor young children to read.

Presidential Honors Scholarship. We propose a Presidential Honors Scholarship that further emphasizes the importance of student achievement. This program would award one-year, $1,000 scholarships to the top 5 percent of graduating high school students in every high school in the nation. We need to send a message to every high school in America that we are serious about excellence.

* * *

Reducing Fraud and Abuse. The Administration has made aggressive accountability and oversight efforts to remove ineffective schools from the student financial aid programs, both protecting students and ensuring accountability for taxpayer funds. The U.S. Department of Education's efforts, along with new statutory controls and lender and guarantor efforts, have cut the student loan default rate by more than *one-half*, from 22.4 percent for the FY90 cohort to 10.7 percent for the FY94 cohort. About 700 institutions have been eliminated from eligibility to participate in the federal student assistance programs, based on high default rates. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education has reduced the administrative burden on participating institutions by streamlining our regulations and by reengineering our administrative processes to make them less intrusive and more effective.

A call to parents, schools, colleges and universities to help students take advantage of these expanded options.

Although the federal government can expand options for paying for college, it will be up to students, parents, families, communities, colleges and universities, and states to make them work.

- **Students** must work hard, play by the rules, and assume responsibility for obtaining the education they will need to get a job and succeed in life.

- **Parents** must make sure their children take the high school classes they need (such as chemistry, four years of math, advance placement and tech-prep courses, and at least two years of a foreign language) to get into college and take advantage of the savings afforded by the tax policies to help support their children once they are in college.

- **Schools** can make sure students (as early as in middle school) and their families understand the options available for paying for college and make sure students take the classes and obtain the skills they need to enroll and succeed in college.

- **Colleges and universities** must contain costs of postsecondary education to assure that the benefits of these increases in federal support accrue to the intended beneficiaries—students and their families, while maintaining their world-class standards of excellence.

- **States** can build on the HOPE Scholarship plan by making scholarships available for four years of college for students who maintain a B average.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Current training and unemployment programs were designed in a very different time to suit a different economy. Today, gaining entry into the labor market requires a higher level of skill, and maintaining membership in the workforce requires continuous learning. In this context, the transition from school to work and opportunities for lifelong training require our attention as never before.

School-to-Work Opportunities

The **School-to-Work Opportunities Act**, signed by President Clinton in 1994, broadens educational, career and economic opportunities for students in high school, including creating pathways for those not immediately bound for four-year colleges and for the many young people who cannot see the relevance of what they're doing in the classrooms to the world of work, and thus get bored and tune out. When the barrier between academic learning and vocational education is broken, when work-based learning and school-based learning are linked, these students not only stay in school, but they become engaged in learning and do better and continue on to college.

> Students at the **Oakland Health and Bioscience Academy in Oakland, California** learn all aspects of the health care industry. Their knowledge of health care includes planning, management, finance, technical and production skills, technology, labor issues, community issues, safety, and environmental issues. They gain this broad understanding through a variety of learning experiences and teaching techniques. Interactive career explorations and a 200-hour hospital internship in the 11th and 12th grades expose them to the business, administrative, and clinical departments of a health care facility. Students also create work-based learning portfolios, which include reflective journal entries and work samples keyed to health career standards. Projects offer an opportunity to explore different aspects of health care and their relationship. Projects may simulate the decision-making processes of a health care provider—for example, reading a case study of a lead-poisoned child, interpreting the results of lab tests, and creating a medical management plan. Student teams may explore health care delivery systems by planning a school-based clinic, and operating a student-run health education center.

All 50 states have received grants under School-to-Work to plan comprehensive training and education and apprenticeship systems. By late 1996, 37 states had made sufficient progress in their planning efforts to receive 5-year grants for implementing their plans. More than 500,000

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young people in 1,800 schools throughout the nation are participating in school-to-work systems that integrate academic and vocational instruction and provide work-based learning, preparing them for one to two years of college or more and careers. More than 135,000 employers have been involved in these efforts.

The support of the business community and state and local governments is essential to maintain local and state school-to-work systems that will help ensure a pathway to the middle class for most Americans.

A G.I. Bill for America's Workers

A centerpiece of President Clinton's G.I. Bill for America's Workers has been our proposal to fundamentally reform the current federal job-training system. We have proposed consolidating at least 70 separate job training programs, replacing them with an integrated system that minimizes red tape and maximizes individual choice in each local community. Unemployed workers and workers in transition from one job to another would receive Skill Grants of up to $3,000 to use as they choose to learn new skills to find new and better jobs.

We would provide these workers access—through computerized networks open to all and One-Stop Career Centers already operating in many states—to reliable information on jobs, careers, skill sets required for those jobs, and the success records of various training institutions, so that they can make informed choices about how best to improve their futures.

For our youth, federal vocational education, as well as training, and employment programs will be reshaped to support the community-based school-to-work activities that have evolved in response to the innovative School-to-Work initiative we began in 1994. These programs enable high schools, colleges, and the private sector to offer all youth academically rigorous school- and work-based learning opportunities so that all youth graduate with the skills and habits of mind necessary to benefit from college education, lifelong learning, and rewarding careers.

For adults with basic literacy skills ***or*** for adults who do not have the literacy skills to succeed in the workplace as citizens or as parents, we will revamp the Adult Education Act so it can better meet adult learners' needs and be more accountable for program results.

TECHNOLOGICAL LITERACY

Just as 100 years ago the nation struggled with the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy, today we confront the transition from an industrial to a global, technological economy. Technology—the World Wide Web, computer-aided design, word processing, data processing, electronic transfers—has become an engine of our economic growth and has fundamentally changed the ways we learn, how we do business, and the skills students in America need to flourish in the world of work. States, communities, business, families and teachers need to ensure that by the dawn of the next century every classroom in America is connected to the information superhighway with high-quality computers, creative software, and well-trained teachers.

Today, technological literacy—computer skills and the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity and performance—is a new basic that our students must master. Preparing our children for a lifetime of computer use is now just as essential as teaching them to read and write and do math. Every major U.S. industry has begun to rely heavily on computers and telecommunications to do its work.

Technology also enriches education. Children with access to computers and trained teachers can learn faster and learn better. In some cases, scores on standardized tests of basic skills for children taught with computers rise by 10 to 15 percent compared to the scores of those taught using conventional instruction. With computers, students can learn at their own pace and practice as much as they need to. For students with disabilities, technology such as word processing and speech recognition can give them the tools they need to participate fully in challenging academic courses. Children master basic skills in 30 percent less time than would normally have been the case. Using technology, quality software and good teachers, students can also learn differently. For example, instead of reading about the human circulatory system in a book and seeing textbook pictures, students can use technology to see blood moving through veins and arteries, watch the process of oxygen entering the bloodstream, and experiment to understand the effects of cholesterol on blood flow, gaining a better understanding of these processes.

Despite the importance and promise of technology, America's schools are not yet prepared for the technological era. About half of all teachers have little or no experience at all with technology in the classroom. Only 4 percent of schools have a computer for every five students—a ratio that allows regular use by each student. Only 9 percent of classrooms have connections to the Internet.

The goal we have presented cannot be set and cannot be achieved unless we all work together. It can be met only with communities, businesses, governments, teachers, parents and students all joining together—in a sense, a high-tech barn raising.

Technology in Support of Reform

A partnership between the Union City, New Jersey, school district and Bell Atlantic turned around a failing middle school. Christopher Columbus Middle School demonstrates how technology can improve student performance. Every classroom has several computers and students and teachers have computers at home so that they—and parents—can communicate with each other, get assignments and do homework. As a result of intensive use of technology, reading, math and writing scores are up significantly. Moreover, the school, which had a high absenteeism rate, now has the best attendance record in the district.

Beginning in 1995, President Clinton challenged the nation's parents, teachers, government, community, and business leaders to work together to ensure that all children in America are technologically literate by the dawn of the 21st century—equipped with the communication, math, science, and critical thinking skills essential for the 21st-century economy. He established the four pillars of his technology literacy agenda:

1. Connect every school and classroom in America to the information superhighway;
2. Provide access to modern computers for all teachers and students;
3. Develop effective and engaging software and on-line learning resources as an integral part of the school curriculum; and
4. Provide all teachers the training and support they need to help students learn through computers and the information superhighway.

The response to the President's challenge was immediate and came from all parts of the American community. While much remains to be done, an enormous amount has already been accomplished and steady progress continues to be made.

The Private Sector Response. CEOs of some of the nation's largest and most innovative technology and telecommunications companies have responded to the President's challenge by contributing resources and energy to work in partnership with schools and communities in meeting all four of the President's goals.

In October, the President announced the U.S. Tech Corps, a volunteer organization which enables high-tech workers from the private sector to assist teachers and schools to put the information age at the fingertips of their students.

America's Technology Literacy Challenge. In his 1996 State of the Union Address, President Clinton asked Congress to fund a $2 billion, five-year Technology Literacy Challenge designed to catalyze state, local, and private sector partnerships in each state to achieve the four educational technology goals and to spur substantial additional private, state and local investment in education technology. Congress supported the President's request for first-year funding and appropriated

$200 million for grants to states to launch this challenge. States will develop a strategy for using the funds to achieve the President's four goals and for ensuring that no students—especially students in low-income areas and in districts with the greatest need for technology—are left behind. The Challenge builds on the Secretary of Education's national plan, *Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st Century, Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge*. The President's FY 1998 budget calls for more than double funding to $425 million.

The **Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program** is a national and international hands-on environmental science and educational program that officially started on Earth Day 1995. GLOBE uses scientific instruments and state-of-the-art technology to make science relevant to today's K-12 students. Through GLOBE, students conduct an array of measurements and observations at their schools and share their data via the Internet with other students and scientists around the world to detail an environmental picture of the globe. Vice President Al Gore articulated his vision of the GLOBE program in his book, *Earth in Balance*. He proposed a program "involving as many countries as possible that will use school teachers and their students to monitor the entire earth..."

The Technology Innovation Challenge Grants. This component of the technology literacy challenge invites school systems, colleges, universities, and private businesses to form partnerships to develop creative new ways to use technology for learning. These local innovation grants focus on integrating innovative learning technologies to improve teaching and learning. Each federal dollar is matched by more than 3 to 1 by local and private funds. The 19 consortia funded in FY95 out of 500 proposals are reaching schools with 1.2 million students and involve partnerships with businesses, museums, libraries, and parks in school systems around the nation. An additional 24 partnerships funded in FY96 will allow 24 school districts to work in partnership with a total of 153 other school districts and 130 businesses in 34 states. Another $57 million will be available for the program in FY97 to support a third round of grants and FY98 will call for $75 million—a more than 30 percent increase.

Universal and Affordable Access to Advanced Telecommunications. President Clinton signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996 which ensures that all U.S. schools, libraries, hospitals, and clinics have affordable access to advanced telecommunications services. The President called on the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) regulators to ensure that every school and library has access to the information superhighway and, in November 1996, the Federal/State Joint Board on Universal Service unanimously recommended that schools and libraries receive discounts for telecommunications services, Internet access, and internal connections. If approved by the FCC, the average discount would be about 60 percent, and one-third of all schools and libraries will receive discounts of 80 to 90 percent. Without these discounts, many schools will be cut off from the enormous potential of the information

superhighway—putting their students and communities at a severe competitive disadvantage in the informational marketplace of information, ideas and commerce.

NetDays. The President and Vice President launched a historic effort to mobilize communities of volunteers to connect classrooms to the Internet. As a result, on March 9, 1996, the President and Vice President and more than 20,000 volunteers laid six million feet of cable connecting thousands of California schools with the technology needed to link classrooms, libraries, and laboratories to the information superhighway. This effort sparked an enormous response around the nation and in the fall of 1996 over 40 states organized and participated in NetDays, wiring over 25,000 schools, using over 250,000 volunteers. More NetDays are scheduled for this year.

21st Century Teachers. The new technology cannot make much of an impact on learning unless teachers help find creative new ways to exploit its power and make the new tools an integral part of their teaching. The teachers, and the organizations that support teachers, all stepped forward earlier this year to work together to meet the President's challenge. The National School Boards Association, the National PTA, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and many other business and professional organizations have launched this initiative to recruit thousands of teacher volunteers who will improve their own understanding of how to use education technology and share their expertise with at least five of their peers during the coming school year.

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